

DAWN Report

DAWN - DEMOCRATIC ACTIVIST FOR WOMEN NOW!

Spring Newsletter - May 2009

Where we have been and where we are going

by Noelani Sallings, President

One thing that I have learned during my adulthood is that all organizations have a history and that history must be recognized from time to time in order to continue with progress.

We were born out of grassroots volunteers which began with Barbara Boxer's campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1992.

Since our inception in January 1993, DAWN has:

- Helped Zoe Lofgren win her upset victory in the June 1994 primary.
- Researched and supported pro-choice progressive local city and school board candidates for election.
- Held forums on local candidates, the Women's Caucus, choice, NAFTA, politics of breast cancer and the radical right, understanding the Democratic Party, women & war in Bosnia, economics & analysis of election results.
- Found and exposed radical right candidates running for office in Santa Clara County.
- Supported San Jose and Sunnyvale's ordinances designed to protect a woman's right to choose.
- Played a key role in organizing the pro-choice defense of medical facilities during Operation Rescue's summer offensive in San Jose.
- Published a newsletter and monthly calendar of Santa Clara County Democratic and women's events.

Our mission is very clear still; to channel and express our enthusiasm for a new era of equality, we have formed a Democratic club with the following commitments:



- Assist in the selection, appointment, and election of pro-choice progressive Democratic women to office locally, statewide, and nationally.
- Support pro-choice progressive, female-friendly issues through frequent contact with people who can effect change.
- Oppose radical right-wing, anti-feminist, anti-choice politics.

During this time we have supported and helped many DAWN supported candidates get elected into office and support DAWN's agenda.

So, what is there still left to do? Oh, so much more. After a day like this, it seems like the whole world still needs enlightenment.

- We must continue to protect a woman's right to choose by educating the youth.
- Fight for equal pay and equal rights in the workplace. Just because we are mothers does not mean that we are not as or less qualified for a position.
- Continue to get more women elected into office locally. We must donate to women campaigns, give big and give often to women candidates. On average, women candidates raise less money than their male opponents.
- Join our LGBT brothers and sisters in their fight for equality. DAWN women know all too well what it is like to be treated unfairly and we will fight with you for equality.

We have already accomplished so much but there is still more work left to do. I am ready for this challenge and look forward to working with each and every one of you.

I would like to close with a thank you to all DAWN members, without you, DAWN would be nothing.

Emerge Event at Deepka Lalwani's

Guest Contributor, Priya Talreja

On Sunday, Emerge California put on an event at Deepka Lalwani house in order to expose young women of color to the idea of running for public office and to break some of society's barriers that many women of color are help in by. There were a variety of local politicians eager to share their support and advice about why to run for office and how to approach the idea. Their advice was candid and encouraging. Spokeswomen from Emerge also spoke enthusiastically about the program. It seems to be a great opportunity for women of color to even the playing field, and get the mentoring, training and encouragement that their while male peers might be privy too because of their predisposed status in society.

Since I am a high school teacher in San Jose, I always looking out for opportunities for my students. This meeting was primarily helpful for me to find out what is available for them, I was able request visits from local politicians as speakers in a speakers series I am creating at **Pioneer High School**. I also was able to meet with Liliana Li, a representative from Vision New America. She shared with me this amazing program that helps high school and college students gain experience working in government organizations. I look forward to working with her as we encourage more youth to take what they learn in the classroom and put it into practice through an internship.

Increasing College Opportunities for Foster Youth



Guest Contributor, Paul Fong

Nowadays it seems that there is a presumption that after high school comes college. While I wish this was true for everyone, the reality is — it isn't. I believe everyone has the right to attend college despite their circumstances. Unfortunately, today's foster youth have a harder time getting into college because of residency issues. This is why I have introduced AB 669, which will change residency requirements so that foster youth have a better financial transition into college.

Statistics can be sobering. Each year, approximately 4,000 youth are emancipated from California's foster care system. Within 2-4 years of emancipation 51% of foster youth face unemployment and 40% will face homelessness within the first 18 months. Only 1%-5% of foster youth ever graduate from college.

Currently, a foster youth becomes emancipated after their 18th birthday. In the eyes of the state, the foster youth is now on their own. To apply to college in California and to determine whether a student is eligible for in-state tuition, it takes one year and one day before a student can establish their own residency. Until that time students' residency is based on that of their parents or they have to live in the same location for a continuous year. For foster youth,

this gap presents a problem, because as wards of the State of California, they can move several times in a 12 month period and they may not be in contact with their biological parents.

AB 669 allows foster youth age 19 and younger to claim California residency on financial assistance forms, such as Cal Grant, so they can receive critical financial assistance to attend a California community college and pay in-state tuition. It will provide these students California residency status for the year and one day needed until the time they can establish residency on their own. Also, this bill will ensure that community colleges' open enrollment policy is true to its intent.

In 2007-08, the California community colleges served approximately 6,000 self-identified former foster youth. I am working hard to get these numbers up and AB 669 through the Assembly and the Senate. I want to see all youth have the opportunity to attend college, enrich their lives and enter the career they have dreamed about. To support AB 669 or learn more about it, visit my web site www.assembly.ca.gov/fong Together we can be sure foster youth have the future they so heartily deserve.

DON'T FORGET!

**This Sunday
June 7th at 11 am**

**DAWN Annual
Fundraiser
at 1294 Hanchett Ave.,
San Jose, 95126
Champagne Brunch
and Silent Auction**

Education Must be A National Priority

Guest Contributor, Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan

When people ask me why I am running for Congress after such a hard fought campaign to win an Assembly seat, first I say "Thank you." Running for the Assembly showed me just how much a committed group of people working together can accomplish. It is humbling to be the recipient of so much good will, hard work and generosity. I know it and I am grateful.

So thank you DAWN members for all you did to help me put the 15th district in the Democratic column.

What could possibly convince me to wage another campaign now, especially an expensive and difficult contest among friends? It is my belief that education is the fundamental building block of America's new economy. The answer to job loss, increasing income inequality, dependence on foreign oil and skyrocketing deficits is education. Investing in our people, research and training is the most direct route to a lasting recovery and reliable economy long term. A well-educated, highly skilled workforce will increase our ability to compete globally, fuel technological innovation, and guarantee a vibrant marketplace at home.

All of the Democratic candidates in the 10th CD race support universal health care; we agree on the need for energy self-sufficiency and support efforts to address global warming. However, I believe that education must also be a national priority. Our security, our economic prosperity and the quality of our food and water depend more than ever on well-educated workers.

For 18 years I championed education as a School Board Member in the San Ramon Valley. Raising student achievement, teacher performance and building a community that valued our schools gave me

satisfaction and our schools dramatically improved, now ranking among the top 5%. Our teacher retention rates went up and the number of students attending college reached 96%.

Everyone took pride in our students' scholarship and achievement.

Sadly, my story is not typical in our state or our country. High achieving schools should be the norm in America, but they are not. Education policy and funding, for the most part, has been left to the states. Today, in California, we face a \$21 billion dollar deficit, which we will shortly close by cutting programs, services and jobs, including many in education. We lack the political will to insulate schools from this crisis.

There is limited relief from the federal government. Historically, it has stepped in to help with college loans and grants and it has imposed a passel of mandates on local schools, but rarely sent the dollars to implement them. Most recently, to address declining student achievement, President Bush offered "No Child Left Behind." Although designed to close the achievement gap, it became little more than an empty promise and never delivered

the funds to make it work.

In order to survive this economic downturn, recover, grow and expand the economy, we must produce a workforce second to none. That means investing in research, universities, math, science and technology classes and early childhood education to prepare kids to learn. It means producing more scientists, medical experts, engineers and linguists. The United States' ability to lead the world economy depends directly on our commitment to education.

For me, this is a patriotic as well as heartfelt and lifelong mission. The situation is urgent. We cannot wait for the problems to be solved state by state. Education must become a national priority.



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Immigration Bill

Guest Contributor, Congressman Mike Honda

Early on the morning of January 28, Shirley Tan's doorbell rang and her family's life changed in an instant. Tan, a mother of 12-year-old twins who lives in Pacifica, California, with her partner of 23 years, Jaylynn "Jay" Mercado, was getting her sons ready for school when U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement agents came to her front door, produced an order of deportation, and placed her under arrest. Suddenly, the life she had known for more than two decades came to a stop.

Tan was ordered to return to the Philippines, a country she had fled after being brutally attacked by a relative, who also murdered her mother and sister in front of her.

Following the attack on her and her family, and after arriving in the United States on a tourist visa, Tan applied for asylum and was told by her attorney, again and again, that her case was still pending. She was unaware, however, that the asylum request had, in fact, been denied.

In the years that followed, Tan established a home and family with Mercado and Mercado's elderly mother, who relies on Tan as her primary caretaker. "We're just a simple, happy family," Tan recently told People Magazine, noting that she told the immigration officers "I am not a fugitive."

Yet, under current U.S. immigration policy, thousands of couples like Tan and Mercado are faced with the very real possibility that their families will be torn apart.

Though Mercado is an American citizen, she cannot sponsor Tan for a green card, as married straight couples do, because they are in a lesbian relationship. According to a study by Gary Gates, of the Williams Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles, an estimated 36,000 couples are in similar situations.

Tan, whose deportation has been delayed through 2011, thanks to the support of Congresswoman Jackie Speier (CA-12) and following a rare private bill introduced on her behalf by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), is now working with Immigration Equality, a non-profit group dedicated to assisting families like hers, to advocate for a change in policy.

She and Mercado understand that, until Congress takes action to treat lesbian and gay couples equally under the law, her likely deportation still looms as a very real possibility.

In recent months, there are encouraging signs that Congress is addressing the plight of Tan and Mercado's family, and other binational, lesbian and gay couples.

I am proud to be part of that effort. The Reuniting American Families Act, which I introduced in early June, would allow American citizens, like Mercado, to sponsor their permanent partners for residency.

It is the first time a larger bill addressing family immigration issues has included families like Tan's, and I believe it is imperative that we end discrimination against lesbian and gay couples – while standing up for all families caught up in our broken immigration system – under the law. "We are hoping for a miracle," Mercado told People, while Tan's son Jashley added that, "I love my mom and I don't want her to leave."

My bill would ensure that Shirley and Jay's family can remain together, and that their twin sons can be with both of their parents here in the United States.

Keeping loving families together, after all, seems like the least our laws should do.



DAWN Issues Statement in support of equal rights for its LGBT brothers and sisters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 26, 2009
Contact: Noelani Sallings, President 408.480.8671

SAN JOSE - DAWN (Democratic Activist for Women Now) issued the followed statement in response to the California Supreme Court's ruling upholding Proposition 8:

"We were heartbroken to hear news of the Supreme Court's ruling on Proposition 8, but we are confident that in the end equality for all will prevail," says Noelani Sallings, President of DAWN, Democratic Activist for Women Now.

"Today's decision hurt emotionally but sparked a fire in those of us who have spent years fighting for civil rights. The validation of those 18,000 marriages shows us that there is still some fundamental good out there and that this fight is not over." Sallings says, "Thirty-three years ago my parents were able to get married it was only because of a fight that happened 7 years earlier by the Lovings that gave them the ability to do so. We must continue to upholding the constitution and realize that all humans have certain inalienable rights."

"The right to marry whomever you love should not be based on color of your skin or sexual orientation. DAWN knows the struggles and we will rally behind our LGBT brothers and sister and all those who will fight for equality." Sallings urges, "We are calling all of you who have experienced inequality in your life to join us."

"We have lost a battle today but all great wars have at least one battle lost. In the end justice will overcome, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gay communities will have equal rights. Now let's get to work!"

BAYMEC Disappointed by the California Ruling on Proposition 8

The Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee expressed disappointment at today's mixed ruling delivered by the California Supreme court on the matter of Proposition 8 and marriage equality. The Court upheld the reprehensible and discriminatory proposition, yet at the same time allowed the over 18,000 marriages performed before Nov. 4, 2008, to stand.

"Today the Supreme Court reinforced the idea that our constitution may be easily amended, and that the civil rights of the minority in California are not protected from the whims of the majority," said BAYMEC President Leslie Bulbuk. "This ruling also declared that only some couples, those who married during a small window of opportunity, will now have access to full recognition and equality under the law."

BAYMEC's board of directors, members and allies were actively engaged in last year's effort against Prop. 8.

"Members of the LGBT community did not fight alone," said Bulbuk. "We worked with so many wonderful allies in our broader community – the labor movement, civil rights organizations, women's rights groups, immigrant rights groups, political organizations and minority groups, among others. This combined effort made it possible for us to defeat Prop. 8 in Santa Clara County."

BAYMEC reiterates its commitment to working tirelessly alongside this same coalition to ensure that Prop. 8 will be invalidated at the ballot box in the future.

"We may have lost a battle today, but we know that justice will prevail for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community," Bulbuk said. "For decades we have faced obstacles in our march toward equality, and with hard work and a commitment to changing the hearts and minds of Californians, this obstacle too shall be overcome."

Upcoming Events

**DON'T FORGET! This Sunday June 7th at 11 DAWN Annual Fundraiser
at 1294 Hanchett Ave., San Jose, 95126
Champagne Brunch and Silent Auction**

Saturday, June 6 at 9:30 am

HEALTHCARE FORUM

San Mateo City Hall
330 West 20th Avenue (near O'Farrell Street), San
Mateo Free. Demystify the healthcare reform debate

FREE, for more info call 408-299-5135

Tuesday, June 30 at 6pm

DAWN Board Meeting

SEIU Local 521
2302 Zanker Road, San Jose

Saturday, June 13 at 5pm

An Evening in the Wine County

Fortino Winery 4525 Hecker Pass Highway, Gilroy
Lt. Jose A. Santiago Memorial Foundation

Friday, August 28 at 7:30am

Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Equality Day Breakfast
Wyndham Hotel, for more info call 408-299-5135

Saturday, June 27 at 10am

Domestic Violence Information & Resource Fair

InnVision Georgia Travis Center
297 Commercial Street, San Jose

Saturday, September 26 at 6 pm

BAYMEC Annual Dinner at the Fairmont

For more information visit:

www.baymec.net

Save the Date: DAWN Friend-raiser September

Be sure to check the date above your name on the mailing label below. That is when your DAWN dues must be renewed.

Don't let your membership lapse! Only members current for at least 30 days can vote for endorsements and other DAWN voting issues. Renew now: www.sccdawn.org

DAWN - Democratic Activist for Women Now

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